



Universitat de Lleida  
Escola de Doctorat

Plaça de Víctor Siurana, 1  
E 25003 LLEIDA (Catalunya)  
Tel.+ 34 973 70 20 43  
escoladoctorat@udl.cat  
www.doctorat.udl.cat

## **PROTOCOL FOR THE DEFENCE OF THESES BY ELECTRONIC MEANS**

Pursuant to RD 99/2011, of 28 January, which regulates official Doctoral teaching and Agreement no. 67/2014 of the Governing Council of 10 April 2014, which approves the **Academic Regulations on Doctoral Courses** of the Universitat de Lleida, the following Protocol is established for the defence of theses by electronic means at the Universitat de Lleida.

### **Article 1. Thesis defence in person**

In general, all theses of the Universitat de Lleida must be defended in person in one of its facilities.

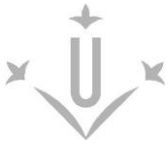
The doctoral student and all the members of the panel must be present on the day of the defence.

### **Article 2. Thesis defence in person but with the electronic participation of one or both members of the panel from outside the UdL (partial format)**

- 2.1 In exceptional circumstances, the doctoral student, with the approval of the thesis supervisor, may ask the Academic Committee and the director of the Doctoral School to defend their thesis with the attendance by videoconference of one or both members of the panel from outside the UdL.
- 2.2 In this format, the chair or secretary of the panel (UdL member) and the doctoral student must be present in person in the place where the defence is held, which must be in one of the facilities of the Universitat de Lleida.
- 2.3 The attendance of one or both members of the panel from outside the UdL may be allowed by electronic means on the day of the thesis defence (not in person, by videoconference).
- 2.4 In any case, the Academic Committee and the director of the School may authorize this format of defence, if all the requirements of deadlines and form are met, in order to hold the defence with all legal guarantees, bearing in mind that this is a question of exceptional cases.

### **Article 3. Defence of theses by electronic means (complete format)**

- 3.1 In exceptional and justified circumstances, the doctoral student, with the approval of the thesis supervisor and tutor, may ask the corresponding Academic Committee and the director of the Doctoral School to defend their thesis by electronic means (by videoconference).
- 3.2 This format may be authorized when it is justified and accredited that it is not possible to defend the thesis using any of the formats included in articles 1 and 2.
- 3.3 The cases in which this type of defence may be authorized are:
  - Situations of an exceptional nature in which it is not possible to access the facilities of the UdL.
  - Justified emergency situations which represent the need to defend the thesis within a specific period, and not being able to defend it may be detrimental to the doctoral student.
  - Theses which have been prepared in the framework of a joint supervision agreement, provided that it is not possible to undertake the defence using the formats considered in articles 1 and 2.
  - Other exceptional and emergency circumstances duly accredited and justified by the doctoral student with the approval of the supervisor(s) and tutor.



3.4 In any case, the Academic Committee and the director of the School may authorize this format of defence, if all the requirements of deadlines and form are met, in order to hold the defence with all legal guarantees, bearing in mind that it is a question of exceptional cases.

#### **Article 4. Procedure for thesis defence in the partial (article 2) and complete (article 3) formats**

##### **4.1 Before the defence**

- 4.1.1 The doctoral student must ask the Academic Committee and the director of the School to defend the thesis in the partial format or in the complete format with the approval of the thesis supervisor/s. This request shall be attached to the doctoral thesis submission application which is presented through the Electronic Office of the UdL.
- 4.1.2 It shall be possible to modify the defence format subsequently, provided that the requirements of emergency and exceptional nature mentioned in the previous articles are met. In order to request the change from the Academic Committee and from the director of the School, it shall be necessary to make an express application which shall be available on the School's website.
- 4.1.3 Starting from the day after completion of public registration of the thesis, the UdL member of the panel (chair or secretary) must notify the Doctoral School by e-mail ([escoladoctorat@udl.cat](mailto:escoladoctorat@udl.cat)) of the date and time of the defence, **15 days before the defence**, as established in the academic regulations on doctoral courses. This period shall be reduced in the cases in which it is essential to make a change of format for emergency reasons. In these cases, it shall be necessary to notify the date and time, at least **five working days before** the defence, starting from the day after the communication of authorization to change the format. Should it be a defence in the partial format, it shall be necessary to indicate the place where the defence shall be held. This place must meet the technical requirements which ensure the smooth running of the videoconference. The UdL member of the panel shall also confirm that all the members of the panel appointed are willing to participate electronically on the date and at the time indicated.
- 4.1.4 The UdL member of the panel must notify (sufficiently in advance) the other members that the defence will be undertaken by electronic means. They shall have to explain the procedure and they shall send them all the additional support information which they have been sent by the School.
- 4.1.5 The UdL member shall have to offer the opportunity to test the videoconference tools which shall be used for the defence (explained in detail in the section *Thesis Defence*) so that, if required, they can become familiar with them and test the remote devices (audio and video). To this end, the panel will have to agree on a day to hold the test and notify this to the Doctoral School. The School shall send a link to the UdL member of the panel in order to be able to hold the videoconference corresponding to the test session. In relation to defences in the partial format, the connection of the UdL member of the panel must be undertaken from the room reserved for the day of the defence.
- 4.1.6 The School shall provide the space on the Virtual Campus with the full name of the doctoral student. The administrators of this space shall be: the Doctoral School and the UdL member of the panel.

The Doctoral School shall register the members of the panel from outside the UdL with the Virtual Campus. To this end, the School shall require the members of the panel to send by e-mail ([escoladoctorat@udl.cat](mailto:escoladoctorat@udl.cat)) a digitally signed copy of their identity document (ID card, passport). If the external members do not have an electronic signature (electronic ID card or any other valid digital certificate), the UdL member of the panel or the Doctoral School shall have to undertake an additional verification by videoconference. This verification may be carried out



on the day established by the panel to undertake the test of the thesis. Once the identity of the members has been verified, the School shall register them with the virtual campus and they will receive an e-mail to obtain their access credentials.

Within this space there will be:

- a. A folder with the name “*Documents for the panel*”. The School shall make all the documents necessary for the day of the defence available to the members of the panel.
- b. The videoconference tool, through which the defence will be undertaken.
- c. The tool for the anonymous voting of the *Cum Laude*, if appropriate.
- d. All those resources which the School considers to be necessary for the smooth running of the defence shall also be provided.

## 4.2 Development of the defence

The defence of the thesis by electronic means must guarantee the interactivity and intercommunication among all the participants in real time, and the availability of the means during the sessions foreseen in the following section.

The Doctoral School, within the space created on the Virtual Campus, shall add the videoconference tool. **Two** videoconference **sessions** shall be created and, for each of them, the School shall establish who shall have the role of moderator.

- a. **Presentation Session.** This session shall be public (open). The corresponding link shall be disseminated on the website of the Doctoral School, so that the people who so desire can join it. An e-mail shall also be sent through the Virtual Campus announcing the defence of the doctoral thesis.
- b. **Panel Session: Grade.** This session shall be closed (private access); only the members of the panel shall have access. The doctoral student and the rest of the attendees may not access this session, which shall not be made public.

### 4.2.1 Doctoral Student Presentation Session.

- a. The moderators of this session will be: the doctoral student and all of the members of the panel.
- b. In the **partial format**, the UdL member of the panel will, at the beginning of the session, verify that the members of the panel who are not attending the defence in person are connected and that all of the remote devices (audio and video) are working correctly.
- c. In the **complete format**, the UdL member of the panel will verify that all of the members of the panel and the doctoral student are connected and that all of the remote devices (audio and video) are working correctly.
- d. The UdL member of the panel shall initiate the defence and the session shall proceed as follows:
  - i. Intervention of the Chair of the Panel, if appropriate
  - ii. Presentation of the thesis by the doctoral student
  - iii. Questions by the members of the panel
  - iv. Answer by the doctoral student
  - v. Interventions by the participants who have joined the session and who hold a doctorate
- e. During the presentation by the doctoral student, the microphones and the cameras of all of the rest of the attendees, and of the members of the panel, must be switched off. The UdL member shall have to confirm this at the beginning of the session. During the questions



- session, the UdL member shall act as the moderator through the tool “*Raise your hand*” of the videoconference resource.
- f. Should the connection be interrupted during the doctoral student’s presentation, the questions or the subsequent assessment, the UdL member of the panel shall have to suspend the defence until the communication is recovered. If it is impossible to restore the connection within a period of 30 minutes, they shall postpone the defence until the technical conditions to restart the session can be guaranteed.
  - g. The UdL member of the panel shall conclude the thesis presentation session once the questions have ended, and shall inform the doctoral student and the attendees of this:
    - i. In the partial format, the doctoral student and all of the attendees shall have to leave the room.
    - ii. In the complete format, both the doctoral student and the attendees who have joined the **Presentation Session** may remain connected to this session in order to wait for the grade once the deliberations of the panel have ended.
  - h. In both defence formats, all of the members of the panel shall disconnect from the presentation session and shall open the **panel session: Grade**. The UdL member of the panel shall verify that only the members of the panel have joined the session.

#### 4.2.2 Panel Session: Grade.

- a. The panel shall deliberate on the grade of the doctoral student during this videoconference session. The UdL member shall act as the moderator in order to facilitate the interventions by the different panel members.
- b. At the time of grading, it shall be necessary to fill in and sign the defence minutes, which shall be available in the folder “*Documents for the panel*”. All of the members of the panel must sign electronically. The UdL member must sign first, and must send the document to the rest of the panel members for them to sign. In any case, the document must always be sent within the sphere of the space created in the Virtual Campus.  
Should the digital signature not be possible because any of the panel members do not have a valid electronic certificate:
  - i. The panel members shall send a message, **through the Virtual Campus**, to the UdL member of the panel indicating that they agree with the grading of the thesis decided upon during the deliberations.
  - ii. The UdL member of the panel shall issue a certificate which records the grading of the thesis and that the panel members have expressed their agreement. The template of the certificate will be available in the folder “*Documents for the panel*”. This document must be signed digitally by the UdL member of the panel and sent to the Doctoral School through the Virtual Campus.
- c. If the grade granted is *Excellent*, the UdL member shall have to announce to the rest of the panel that it is necessary to vote on obtaining the *Cum Laude* distinction.
- d. The three panel members shall have to access the “Voting” (anonymous voting) tool of the Virtual Campus. This tool does not form part of the videoconference tool. It will therefore be necessary to have the virtual campus open in a separate window of the browser to that of the session.
- e. The Doctoral School will have previously created the voting form. The three panel members have to vote by secret ballot. The results of the voting will be automatically saved in the Virtual Campus space corresponding to the thesis and will only be visible by the Doctoral School.



- f. The UdL member of the panel shall issue a certificate recording that the doctoral student is opting for the *Cum Laude* distinction and that all of the panel members have voted by secret ballot. The template for this document will be available in the folder “Documents for the panel”.
- g. The count shall be carried out by the director of the School, in a separate session, once the UdL member of the panel has sent the corresponding certificate, through the Virtual Campus.

#### 4.2.3 Completion of the thesis defence

Once the thesis has been graded and the vote by secret ballot to obtain the *Cum Laude* distinction has been held, if appropriate, the UdL member of the panel shall conclude the panel session and notify the doctoral student:

- i. In the partial format, that they and all the attendees can enter the room again.
- ii. In the complete format, that they can reconnect to the **Presentation Session**, if they did not stay connected to the session (by e-mail or by the channel chosen (e.g. mobile phone)).

The UdL member of the panel shall notify the grade to the doctoral student and shall conclude the thesis defence. **Under no circumstance shall the result of the vote to obtain the Cum Laude distinction be given.**

#### 4.3 Actions immediately subsequent to the defence

The UdL member of the panel shall send a message to the Doctoral School, through the Virtual Campus, announcing that the defence has concluded, and shall enclose the following documentation:

- a. Defence minutes signed by all of the panel members or, failing that, doctoral thesis grade certificate.
- b. Certificate of voting to obtain the *Cum Laude* distinction, if appropriate.
- c. Other documentation required.

The Doctoral School shall officially inform the doctoral student of the grade for their doctoral thesis and of obtaining the *Cum Laude* distinction, if appropriate.

The Doctoral School reserves the right to amend this protocol, if necessary, in order to guarantee the smooth running of the thesis defences by electronic means.